DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 567 EA 021 338

AUTHOR Rooney, A.
TITLE Changing Systems: The Three-Year Plan of the Education Commission of the States, 1989-92.
INSTITUTION Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 29p.
AVAILABLE FROM Distribution Center, Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80295 (Stock No. GP-89-1; $5.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Change Strategies; Educational Administration; *Educational Change; *Educational Development; *Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; High Risk Students; Policy Formation; Public Schools
IDENTIFIERS School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

The Policy and Priorities Committee of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has developed a 3-year plan to guide reform and restructuring of the American public school system. Given the complex challenges facing schools, colleges, and policymakers, ECS focused on three priorities. First, it is necessary to restructure schools, colleges and education systems to ensure higher levels of achievement and higher outcomes for all students. Students should learn not only important skills and information but also how to use the knowledge. Second, it is necessary to attend to the needs of youth at risk of failing school and failing to become productive citizens. Third, minorities need to be brought into full participation in the educational and professional life of the nation. As leaders, ECS will promote several new strategies to aid in accomplishing these tasks: (1) sponsoring debate; (2) providing information to leaders; (3) conducting issue management; and (4) providing strategic assistance partnerships. (SI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED311567

CHANGING SYSTEMS

THE THREE-YEAR PLAN OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES 1989-92

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. K. Allen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 021 338

CHANGING SYSTEMS

THE THREE-YEAR PLAN OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES, 1989-92

SUBMITTED BY
ECS POLICY AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE
RICHARD BOYD, CHAIRMAN

AUGUST 1989

Copies of this book are available for $5.00 from the ECS Distribution Center, 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295, 303-830-3692. Ask for No. GP-89-1.

© Copyright 1989 by the Education Commission of the States. All rights reserved.

The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide interstate compact formed in 1965. The primary purpose of the commission is to help governors, state legislators, state education officials and others develop policies to improve the quality of education at all levels. Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are members. The ECS central offices are at 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295. The Washington office is in the Hall of the States, 444 North Capitol Street, Suite 248, Washington, D.C. 20001.

It is the policy of the Education Commission of the States to take affirmative action to prevent discrimination in its policies, programs and employment practices.

Writer/Editor: A. Rooney

Designer: Debra Komodore

Typesetter: Marci Reser

Contents

Policy and Priorities Committee 4

Preface 5

Continuity Through Fast-Moving Times 7

The Context 13

The Priority Issues 17

The Means to the End 25

The Future 27

"It is not enough to have a good mind.
The main thing is to use it well."

René Descartes

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

POLICY AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

RICHARD BOYD, CHAIRMAN; *superintendent of education, Mississippi*

J. HERMAN BLAKE, *vice chancellor, Indiana University*

NAOMI COHEN, *state representative, Connecticut*

T. EDWARD HOLLANDER, *chancellor, Department of Higher Education, New Jersey*

SHIRLEY GOLD, *state representative, Oregon*

BOOTH GARDNER, *governor of Washington*

MADELEINE KUNIN, *governor of Vermont*

WILLIAM LEPLEY, *director of education, Iowa*

ARTURO MADRID, *Tomas Rivera Center, California*

DEWAYNE MATTHEWS, *executive director, Commission on Higher Education, New Mexico*

ANNETTE MORGAN, *state representative and chairman, Committee on Elementary/Secondary Education, Missouri*

KEN NELSON, *state representative, Minnesota*

CURTIS PETERSON, *state senator and chairman, Education Committee, Florida*

HOWARD "PETE" RAWLINGS, *state delegate, Maryland*

TOMMY THOMPSON, *governor of Wisconsin*

EX OFFICIO:

REGIS GROFF, *state senator, Colorado*

MARLIS MANN, *assistant to the governor, New Mexico*

RUTH RANDALL, *commissioner of education, Minnesota*

Preface

Marian Wright Edelman has said that if we're going to do what is right by our children, we are going to have to move away from single-issue headlines and begin to deal with complex problems in more complex, thorough and persistent ways.

The members of the Policy and Priorities Committee who have developed this report believe that this is increasingly the direction of the Education Commission of the States: toward more complex understanding of education policy issues, more thorough pursuit of solutions and more persistent, long-term efforts to help America's children be the best they can be.

The 1989 plan speaks of three priorities, though the four priorities put forward for the past several years continue to appear in our thinking, writing and work. We still believe that schooling in America must be reformed and restructured to prepare students better for modern lives; we are still concerned about meeting the needs of at-risk youth in danger of disconnecting from family, school and society; we are still concerned about low levels of minority participation and achievement in higher education and professional life; and we still believe that our higher education system must markedly improve undergraduate education and become a stronger partner in school reform. This fourth priority has been integrated into the restructuring priority.

The way we describe, understand and approach these priority issues has evolved from year to year as we have gotten deeper into them. We no longer see them as separate issues but as critical aspects of the larger, more complex economic and social changes sweeping the United States and much of the rest of the world.

How do you bring about, adjust to and safely guide system change? This is the question that will dominate policy discussions in the 1990s. ECS must be a source of answers. Already it offers one answer in the kind of organization it represents — a collaborative organization of people from many different walks of life. Whatever else system change requires, collaboration and unprecedented cooperation are clearly central.

The work of the Policy and Priorities Committee is to provide the larger commission each year with a vision of continuity and change. We have looked back over the last several years at the accomplishments of ECS and forward to the challenges ECS will face. We present our collaborative report in hopes it will stimulate vigorous discussion and thorough approaches and encourage persistent action to improve the lives and futures of our nation's young people.

Richard Boyd
Superintendent of Education, Mississippi
Chairman, ECS Policy and Priorities Committee

CONTINUITY THROUGH FAST-MOVING TIMES

The point of a three-year plan is to maintain continuity over the years as leadership of the organization changes. An Education Commission of the States that radically changed its priorities every year could not be an effective organization. At the same time, however, an organization that could not respond to unexpected opportunities, unforeseen events or new knowledge could not be very effective either.

This three-year plan should do something else as well. It should be a communique between ECS and its constituents that makes it abundantly clear where ECS and the American education agenda have been, where they are and where they need to go. And as a communique, it should paint a lucid and compelling picture of the priorities of a national education leader.

The real task is to focus on critical, enduring issues and, at the same time, respond to shifting developments *within* those issues that call for attention . This has been the strategy employed by the ECS Policy and Priorities Committee as it updates and rewrites the plan each year.

Accordingly, the 1989 plan shares the same general priority issues as its predecessors — amended slightly — but calls attention to new particulars and responds to knowledge and experience gained by commissioners and researchers through state activities and ECS projects. It is important to look back over the last few years and see how far ECS has come in understanding and clarifying its general priority issues through yearly projects and programs.

What follows is a chronological recap of the commission's priorities. What it shows is an evolution toward deeper and deeper understanding of major educational policy problems and greater awareness both of their interconnectedness and of the implications of that interconnectedness for state policy.

In 1986, RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING was a high priority issue for the commission. What that means in terms of specific programs and activities has changed year by year. In 1986 and 1987, the focus was on restructuring the working and regulatory conditions that made it difficult for teachers to respond to state reform initiatives.

During those two years, New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean held "Talks With Teachers" around the country, and the ECS Teacher Renaissance project sponsored numerous meetings and reports about teacher perspectives on reform. At the same time, ECS undertook some early studies of the school change process.

As these activities matured, it became clear that conditions of teaching were not likely to be improved without attention to school leadership. So in 1987, the focus of the restructuring issue moved to leadership. How, ECS asked, can state policy bring about changes in the conditions of teaching and in the kinds and quality of leadership necessary for changing schools?

Meanwhile, studies of the school change process evolved into studies of specific school transformations and how new kinds of leadership brought them about. As these activities progressed, it became clear that restructuring for higher student achievement would have to involve parents as partners in the change. In 1988, the school restructuring issue, still a high priority, included efforts to increase parental involvement. It also focused on the nature of the literacies students would need to master in an increasingly demanding world: higher literacies that include capacities to think critically and creatively, to solve problems and to "learn how to learn."

At the same time, studies of how schools change gave way to active participation in the restructuring of schools. ECS joined forces with the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University and developed the Re:Learning initiative in which several states are restructuring pilot schools and developing new kinds of policy to encourage widespread restructuring for more robust student achievement.

Out of ECS's experience over the last three years comes its current understanding of the restructuring issue and its plans for new activities. Today, ECS expresses its concerns about restructuring also in terms of teacher education policies. The simultaneous renewal and restructuring of the public schools and the education of educators are of paramount concern for states, as is the need for much more critical and creative thinking, problem solving and active learning. Such outcomes clearly require system change, and system change requires new kinds of policy tools. The words and particular foci have shifted, but the ECS commitment to fundamental changes that will dramatically improve achievement is as strong as ever.

The same kind of evolution can be described for the other 1986 priority issues. ADDRESSING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF YOUTH AT RISK has been a priority issue for many years. The focus in the early years was on gathering data about school dropouts and other youth at risk of alienation, disconnection and not making smooth transitions to productive adult lives.

ECS disseminated the data widely, raised consciousness about the issue and convened numerous meetings to discuss the steps policy makers could take to develop comprehensive youth policy initiatives. In 1987, ECS shifted its focus to

studying programs that work for youth at-risk and collaborative, community approaches to youth policy.

How might policy makers facilitate the necessary collaboration and how might state policy affect high-risk students? ECS and the Interstate Migrant Education Council, as one example, entered into collaborative initiatives with groups in various states and sponsored a national summit on the policy issues surrounding at-risk youth.

In 1988, ECS continued to broaden its knowledge of this area by conducting case studies of youth at-risk programs and studies of policy influences on student achievement. As with the other priorities, ECS serves as the link between the issues and state policy makers and legislators, so that armed with good information they can make decisions that fit their education climate and their needs.

As a consequence of all this collaborative activity, networking and research, the at-risk priority issue has evolved in a number of new directions. Programmatically, some projects that began in connection with this issue have merged with restructuring projects and activities. After all, a primary reason for restructuring some schools is to serve high-risk students better.

The idea of mentoring at-risk youth has been joined with the ECS Campus Compact project to create a nationwide effort to help colleges enlist their students in mentoring activities. Mentoring has been shown to be an excellent low-tech, high-results way of handling a serious issue. In this same vein, the results of case studies in the Policy and the Higher Literacies project have led to a focus on the need to develop more challenging curricula for at-risk youth, reexamine accountability systems and retrain teachers in ways to challenge the minds of at-risk youth, from whom too many teachers expect too little.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION was a high priority in 1986. It remains a high priority issue today, though the activities associated with it have blended into the restructuring agenda and projects that focus on minorities in teaching and other professions. After the 1986 ECS reports calling attention to the need for better college teaching, the focus shifted in 1987 to the uses of assessment to bring about improvements.

Also in 1987, Frank Newman's study, *Choosing Quality*, concentrated on the relationships between state policy makers and university leaders as keys to

improving undergraduate education. In 1988, ECS began a study of state policies toward private/nonprofit higher education institutions, in part to extend the discussion of the undergraduate education improvement issue so that policy makers could see where it fits into a larger set of state responsibilities and actions.

Today, ECS initiatives in restructuring education include the entire system — early parenting and early childhood education, local districts and higher education — which is why improving undergraduate education appears in the 1989 plan under restructuring. Although particular projects and meetings have merged with other activities taking place under a different issue banner, the goal remains as it was in 1986: to develop policies that change the incentive structures of universities in ways that will speed improvements in undergraduate education.

ENSURING MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND FULL PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES IN THE PROFESSIONS remains a high priority issue today, just as it was in 1986. In its earlier stages, the effort involved calling national attention to declining proportions of minorities

enrolled in preprofessional and professional programs at American universities.

In collaboration with the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), the American Council on Education (ACE) and other groups, ECS studied minority underrepresentation in baccalaureate and professional programs and published reports such as *One-Third of a Nation* (with ACE) and *Focus on Minorities: Trends in Higher Education Participation and Success* (with SHEEO).

Today's programs and national task forces dealing with the shortage of minority teachers and lack of minority achievement in higher education are both natural outgrowths of work done over the last three years.

As one reads about the priority concerns of state leaders in 1989, and the particular activities and foci they believe they must pursue over the coming years, it is clear that the enduring issues remain. ECS is looking at the right issues, but it is looking at different facets of them each year, attacking subdimensions that yield to effort and deepen our insight.

THE CONTEXT

The current education system is the glory of an earlier age. It was built for another time, another group of people, another set of needs. It is governed by rules, regulations and laws that protect the rights of all students to learn certain minimum skills, but allow little room for innovation and creativity. The system is not designed to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that young people now need in businesses, communities and a global society.

Young people need to be able to visualize problems and situations and then, with the necessary intellectual tools, make them happen or solve them. This requires a synthesis of abilities — not just skills in math and science or language. In the work place of the future, they also will need the ability to communicate, solve problems on the spot and process and synthesize information from across the country or from other countries and deal with people and computers at the same time. If the nation's young people are prepared, the transition will be a snap.

Consider the differences between conditions that prevailed when the foundation for today's education system was built and the conditions that exist today:

1. Educators know much more about how learning occurs. Earlier in this century, most educators assumed that the best way to teach at any level was simply to give students information primarily through lecture or individual reading. This also appeared to be the most economically efficient way to carry out mass education. Now there is considerable evidence that for many students, and for genuine understanding, this is neither the best nor the most efficient method of teaching and learning. If students are to learn not only a collection of facts and skills, but also how to apply them in important situations, they must be actively engaged in their learning. They must use facts and skills as they inquire into important questions; they must be involved in give-and-take with the teacher and other students and other adults. Efficient and effective learning involves *constructing* knowledge, not just receiving it passively.

2. The percentage of students who need to be well educated has changed. In the past, students who could not read and write well could still find jobs. Not

today. In the past, just having basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic was sufficient preparation for a fairly high number of jobs. Today's jobs and the social problems America faces demand that people be good thinkers and problem solvers and know how to adapt and apply information and skills to a much wider range of situations.

3. The student population is much more diverse than the population for which the system was designed. One-third of the nation will be black or Hispanic by the early part of the next century, and these are the groups that are having the least success in the current system. In New York City, students bring more than 100 different languages into the classroom. The system was not designed to handle so much diversity. In addition, the system was based on assumptions about ways

parents would be able to assist student learning. Changes in family structure and parental working patterns have changed parents' capacities to help. The system was built on the assumption that students came to school well fed, from fairly calm, supportive homes with regular routines that gave their lives a pattern. The system also had not been designed to include disabled students as part of its mainstream and this brought another set of circumstances with which it had to deal. These conditions affect how learning occurs, what topics will appeal to students and what ways of learning — visual, auditory, individually, in groups — will work best.

4. Economic and social changes seem more rapid, pervasive and tangible. The current system was not well designed to accommodate rapid changes in social conditions and changes in public expectations for schooling. The nation needs one that can foster debate about uses of new technology, that can act more quickly than ever before. And the learning process must prepare students to be flexible and adaptable — to be able to change and learn new and different knowledge, information and skills throughout their lives.

These and other conditions call into question fundamental aspects of the system. At least six characteristics of the system can be adjusted so that schools operate in a more supportive environment.

• Commitments — What are the basic educational commitments communities have made? To educate all students to be effective problem solvers, thinkers and learners or just teach the basics? These commitments serve as the vision necessary for changing other parts of the system.

• Collaborations — How are people working together? The change needed is from a hierarchical, bureaucratic system that is not flexible enough to meet new conditions to one in which people are working together in new partnerships and collaborations.

• Communications — What is talked about? Who is involved in discussions and decisions? The new system requires more communication across role lines, more shared decision making to handle the rapid changes.

• Roles — If a different type of learning in the schools is needed, state leaders may need to redefine the roles of people from schoolhouse to statehouse. How a district superintendent, a legislator, a school board member views and carries out his or her role is as important as how teachers view their roles. Generally speaking, roles of people outside the school need to shift toward being more supportive of those things that directly lead to student learning and less focused on maintaining the current system.

• Responsibilities — State leaders can change the system by what they hold people responsible for. People in the system must be held more responsible for actual student learning rather than processes that may or may not affect the type of learning sought.

• Regulations — What states choose to regulate and reward also has a great impact on the character of the education system. States need to reduce regulations that are not clearly leading to the goal of all students learning. Rewards need to be given for creative ways of helping students learn and for well-designed ways to try out new ideas.

What does this mean to policy makers? It means a new state role in education policy. It means moving beyond regulation to stimulation, to creating environments for change, creating new standards, measures, roles and responsibilities. It means stimulating far wider collaboration among groups that have not worked together traditionally toward common ends. It means creating real incentives and rewards for innovation and creativity at all levels.

Policy makers must increasingly see that the "communities of solution" to educational problems are much broader than they used to be. Policy solutions must incorporate public and private partnerships. For instance, all of the major urban school districts that have improved their education systems — such as Pittsburgh and San Diego — have done so in partnership with business leaders and a coalition of community leaders and organizations.

State leaders also must strategically influence what schools are doing through the media. They must lead the state conversation about education and they must get those who have the greatest stake to speak the same language and share their commonality.

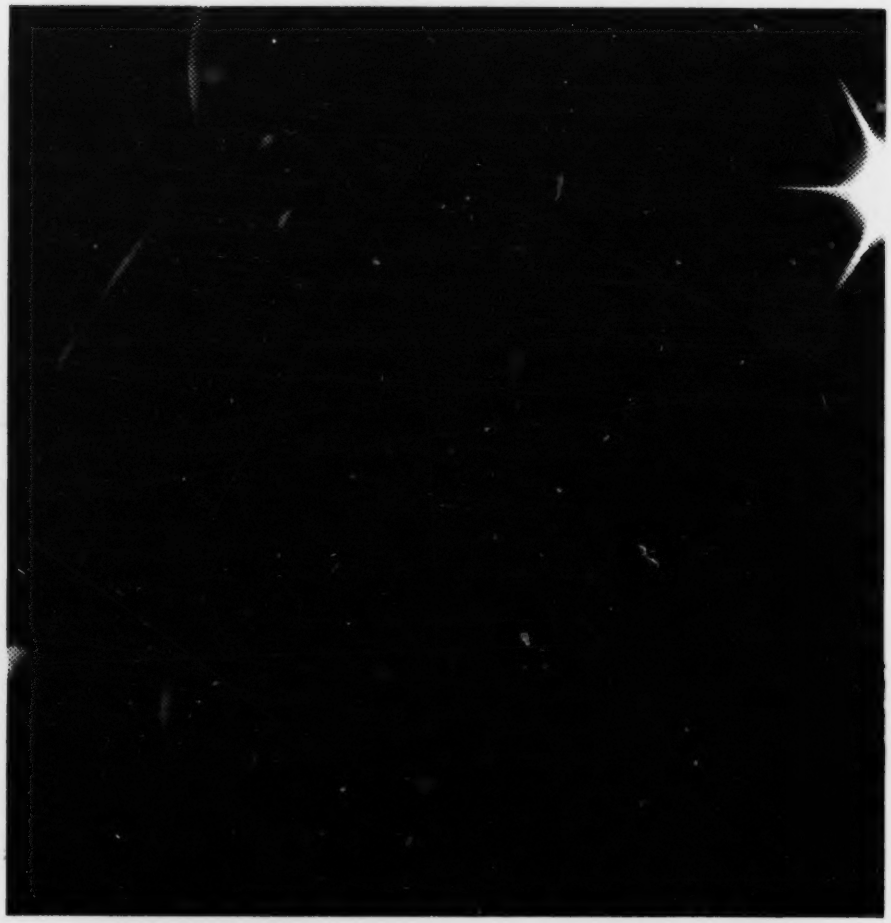
State leaders must do a better job of integrating social, economic and education policy. They must see that there is a great deal of overlap among the three and that none of them operates in isolation. The relationship between institutions and the state must be redefined to address system issues. Thus, state policy in general must be more interactive. Education institutions must be more responsive to market forces regionally, nationally and internationally.

Along the way, public policy makers will come face to face with what to centralize and what to decentralize, what to standardize and regulate and what to let go in order to release and encourage imagination, human energies, creativity and potential.

THE PRIORITY ISSUES

Given the complex challenges facing schools, colleges and policy makers, ECS will continue its focus on the following three priorities through a variety of efforts.

1. *Restructure schools, colleges and education systems to ensure higher levels of achievement and higher outcomes for all students. Students need to learn not only important skills and information but also how to use that knowledge.*



SYSTEM CHANGE

Schools and colleges must make it possible for all students to achieve at high levels and must teach students how to apply the information they receive. They must focus on standards, not standardization, in ways that embrace rather than eliminate diversity.

How can this be accomplished? Data have shown that restructuring, choice, quality standards and accountability all have significant impact. Restructuring, choice, accountability and quality standards are means to an end. The end is for all students to learn how to think and solve problems and achieve at much higher levels.

ECS has taken a major step toward addressing this issue with its Re:Learning effort. In conjunction with the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), ECS is working with people in all parts of the education system to restructure the total school system — from the individual school to the state policy level. This effort is grounded in the belief that schools must be reshaped so they can focus on the primary purpose of education — to help students use their minds well and be able to think, solve problems, analyze and reason.

Participating schools agree to put into practice a set of principles initiated by CES. Schools view the student as an active worker rather than a passive recipient of instruction. Students show what they have learned through demonstrations of mastery — an exhibition — rather than through "time spent" in class and "credits earned."

The principal and teachers see themselves first as teachers and scholars in general education and second as specialists in a particular discipline. The school has simple but universal goals that apply to all students.

ECS's job in the venture has been to deal with governors, legislators and policy makers while CES staff work with schools. Re:Learning states and

districts commit to helping the schools carry out these principles by making organizational and policy changes to support their work. This effort, begun last year and designed to span several more years, is a laboratory for states to share ideas and learn how to restructure their education systems.

The need to restructure does not end at grade 12. In higher education too, restructuring means more than organizational change. It includes such improvements as new incentives for faculty and presidents, higher expectations and greater access. It involves changing the classroom environment and the teaching relationship — the environment in which learning takes place.

State higher education systems must play a more effective leadership role in the life and future of the state and the nation. As state higher education agencies move from a regulatory to a leadership role, ECS must help them clarify their missions and become policy leaders, not just policy implementers. This applies to private as well as public education.

As part of this, an ECS task force has been studying the relationship between state policy and private/nonprofit higher education. The future strengths of U.S. higher education will depend on the nation's ability to increase rather than decrease the independence, flexibility and quality in both public and private sectors.

State policy makers must continue to extend their focus on improving the quality of elementary and secondary schools to the college and university level. Growing demands on colleges to make up deficits in the students' secondary preparation are drawing resources away from other higher education priorities.

Policy makers must look at creative ways to end this drain, including clearer divisions of responsibility among institutions at all levels and greater college/school collaborations to improve college preparation. Curriculum and coursework between high school and college must be articulated much more clearly.

"Everyone from early childhood through higher education needs to define new roles and responsibilities for themselves to support the development of knowledge and skills young people need to succeed."

Garrey Carruthers
Governor of New Mexico
1989–90 Chairman
Education Commission of the States

ACCOUNTABILITY

Major changes in the education system require new standards of measurement as well. By holding schools and colleges accountable for minimal levels of achievement, policy makers have encouraged them to deliver just that. Now it is time to ask policy leaders to make educational institutions more responsible and more accountable; it is time to develop measures that work well with higher-order thinking, and it is time to use accountability as a lever for change. The change, however, must unequivocably be a qualitatively different and higher set of expectations for young people and the education system serving them.

The higher, more abstract skills such as problem solving cannot easily be measured through standardized tests. Policy makers must develop different kinds of accountability systems that promote, assess and reward change in the direction of greater thoughtfulness.

Some states are on the road to doing this through new kinds of tests and new kinds of assessments, such as the exhibitions called for in the Re:Learning effort. Others are using such techniques as portfolios, performances and recitals.

Improved higher education assessment continues to be a major interest at both the institutional and state levels as well. As with elementary and secondary education, policy makers must find new ways to measure what students learn and to judge how effective institutions are in preparing students for the outside world.

It is a formidable challenge for policy makers to come up with useful, reflective measures; however, it is a challenge they must address. ECS will continue to examine and press for new assessment systems that will be a better measure of whether schools and colleges are providing the higher-order thinking skills the nation's citizens need.

CHOICE AND OTHER STRATEGIES

Providing students and their parents more options in their education is another policy tool that ECS and the states are watching closely. ECS sees new evidence every day of the growing interest in public school choice across the country. More than 20 states already have passed legislation or are considering some type of action on public school options.

ECS and its constituents must continue to examine the pros and cons of the various public school choice plans and look for answers to the questions that surround them. Choice, properly thought out and implemented, can be among the strategies used to restructure school systems and, for certain districts, can be the foundation of their restructuring.

Other tools ECS is examining include: waivers from existing regulations; charter schools; curricular changes in areas such as science, math and the humanities; planning and incentive grants; staff development; recognition for high achievement; collective bargaining; and site-based management. In higher education, ECS is studying policy tools such as clearer goals, higher expectations, deregulation, incentives for teaching and leadership and enhanced market forces. These tools are similar to those being looked at for local districts, but their application and interpretation are different in higher education.

2. *Attend to the needs of youth at risk of failing school and failing to become productive citizens.*

URBAN EDUCATION

Through efforts in this area over the past few years, ECS has learned much about at-risk youth and their problems and what can help them and school systems overcome the obstacles they face.

The largest concentration of these students is in the nation's urban areas, which contain almost one-fifth of the U.S. population and a disproportionate number of the minority and poor — two factors that help make children "at risk." In addition, these schools typically lack financial resources or teachers prepared to deal with the special problems of urban schools. More than this, though, often the entire fabric of the community has come unraveled and schools are not prepared to deal with this burden.

"If American business is going to remain a world-class competitor, our employees must be able to read, think, communicate and grow. It's no longer appropriate for manufacturing employees to check their brains at the door. They must be able to recognize and solve problems."

Vaughn L. Beals Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Harley-Davidson, Inc.

With this combination, urban youngsters' performance lags considerably behind that of suburban students. Many schools within urban districts experience dropout rates ranging from 50% to 80%. For those students who do persist, 40% of 12th graders score below the 30th percentile in standardized reading tests. Policy makers must address this situation quickly and effectively. The nation cannot afford to lose this many youngsters.

Reforming the urban schools will be the first priority addressed by the ECS Business Partnership. The partnership has two purposes: to provide the business community access to the latest data on education programs and policies, as well as an opportunity to become a partner in shaping the national agenda for education reform. It is a vehicle to link a select group of business leaders directly with key state policy makers to discuss ways to improve education through structural change.

OTHER STRATEGIES

In addition to focusing on urban education, ECS will expand some of its findings from its previous work in the area of youth at risk. ECS studies show that five strategies are successful in helping these children: parent involvement, interagency and public/private collaboration, school restructuring, early intervention and mentoring.

Aware of the success of mentoring as a strategy, ECS will focus on adult mentoring of youth at risk. ECS's Campus Compact project has embarked on a major campaign to encourage college students to serve as mentors for thousands of young people.

MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT
COUNTING ON YOU

Campus Compact will continue to encourage a connection between higher education and community service. Democracy demands not only an educated citizenry, but also a commitment to shared social and civic values. Higher education has a responsibility to foster the "habits of the heart" that promote responsible participation in American society.

3. *Bring minorities into full participation in the educational and professional life of the nation.*

ECS will continue to work for policies that lead minority students to prepare for college, to enroll in graduate programs and to complete graduate and professional studies. Minority students are woefully underrepresented in colleges and universities, and of those who enter college, fewer finish. Black enrollment in teacher education courses, for example, has declined at twice the rate of overall teacher education enrollment and fewer and fewer blacks are choosing teaching as a career.

ECS's efforts at restructuring schools are designed to provide a more effective education that will prepare minorities to graduate from high school and complete their postsecondary education. This begins with the assumption that *all* children can learn and carries on with attempts to change the way schools and colleges operate and the way they serve minorities.

ECS's long-time interest in teacher quality will be carried forward by a new emphasis on recruiting and retaining more minorities as teacher candidates. Estimates are that one-third of the nation's schoolchildren will be minority by the year 2000. At the same time, only one in 20 teachers will be minority. This situation must be turned around or all children will be deprived of needed role models and the nation's schools of needed talent. A major part of this is the need to restructure the professional education of students who go on to become elementary and secondary school teachers.

The focus on minority teachers will help states find more effective ways of recruiting minorities into teaching and retaining them once they are there. Policy makers must examine policies, such as inequitable teacher placement and testing, that sometimes have exacerbated the shortage of minority teachers.

At the same time, ECS is initiating a new project focusing on minority achievement. This effort will work to increase the number of minorities who enter postsecondary education and prepare the higher education system to deal with a diversity of students.

THE MEANS TO THE END

It is the role of state leaders to create and sustain a conversation that clarifies the vision about what the education system should be and then commit themselves to making the changes that will lead to that vision.

ECS can and should take the lead in identifying issues, informing key constituencies who must work together to accomplish change, helping policy makers and school systems develop the tools for change and demonstrating how to use those tools, and creating a climate where effective change can occur. These are illusive tasks, often difficult to measure, but ECS must be diligent and resourceful about their accomplishment.

To take the lead, ECS must do more of the things it already does and also add new strategies. If ECS is really going to help its constituency — and address its mission to improve American education — it must sponsor and facilitate debate, provide information, help create a climate where change can occur and offer technical assistance to state leaders through partnerships with all segments of the community.

1. SPONSOR DEBATE — Each national forum, SEPS meeting, ALPS gathering and focus group offers an opportunity to share ideas, deepen understanding of issues and gain a consensus.

2. PROVIDE INFORMATION TO LEADERS

a. *Policy* — ECS's primary focus has been and will remain education policy. ECS must continue to collect information about policies states are implementing; analyze what works and what doesn't; share the information through publications, the media and individual contacts; and help leaders use the information to formulate policies in their own states.

b. *Schools* — ECS must do more to inform its constituents about what is and is not happening in schools. The links between policy makers and schools are weak. ECS can bring the two closer together and help policy makers better understand the impact of their work.

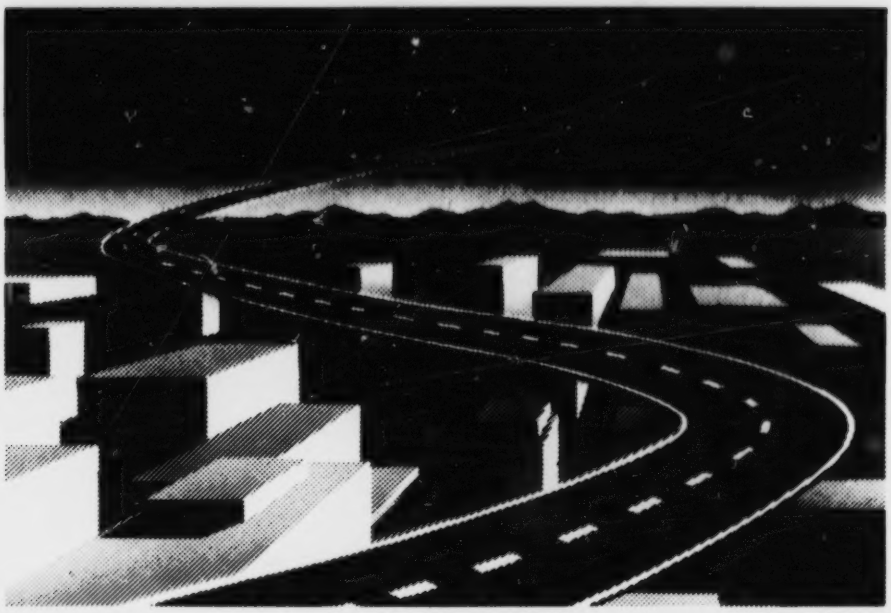
3. ISSUE MANAGEMENT — ECS must develop the language of education so everyone understands the same meaning in the same words. When

ECS talks about "restructuring" or "critical thinking," the terms should paint a similar picture in the minds of those who hear them.

ECS must help create a climate where change can occur and focus the direction of the change. It is difficult to move forward when no one supports your efforts. ECS must broaden its audience to include those who will be affected by policy change so that everyone within a community understands what he or she is working toward and is committed to making the necessary changes.

ECS must identify a larger base of key opinion leaders within education communities and provide the language, the information and the tools for change. ECS must strengthen its collaborations with other education organizations, with business and labor and with the media.

4. STRATEGIC ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIPS — All the information in the world means little if those who need it do not know how to use it. Through efforts such as Re:Learning, ECS must provide more technical assistance to state leaders. ECS can do more to show others how to build coalitions, how to strengthen links between local districts and higher education, and how to create a climate within their own states where effective change can occur.



THE FUTURE

State education policy makers need to reconsider the product — the kinds of students — the system produces. And students must, in fact, be producers of knowledge themselves. What kinds of people does this society want? What kinds of educational and social experiences are most likely to create them? How can this be guaranteed? Who has what responsibilities and how can they be held accountable for them?

State education policy makers need to consider various models for kindergarten through 12th grade and higher education that produce thinkers and lifelong learners and stimulate redesign to accomplish this. State policy needs to be more holistic, interrelated and interwoven. These things are happening now all over the country — well-thought out, creative, holistic approaches to restructuring schools. State policy makers, legislators, school administrators, board members and teachers need to look at these models — not for prescriptive replication, but for adaptive interpretation.

For the coming year and into the foreseeable future, education policy makers will be wrestling with how to do these very things and how policy can enhance, enable and prepare people for their roles in an evolving society.

Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, Colorado 80295